



Tips and timeline for academic requests through the Graduate School

What is this Tip Sheet for?

This document provides clarification about policies and procedures for academic program requests that are routinely submitted to the Graduate School.

Why is this needed?

There are some common mistakes and misconceptions regarding academic policies and procedures of the Graduate School. The intent of this document is to clarify some of these issues for both the *submitters* and the *reviewers* of curriculum requests, to prevent unnecessary delays in approval.

What are the procedures for submitting course and program proposals?

See the University Academic Affairs committee [website](#) for information about institutional processes and forms. Links are provided for [channels for approvals](#), [procedures](#), [course proposal](#) forms, and [program](#) forms. An annual curricular update form for graduate programs is available on the Graduate School website under [forms](#) (typically due in March, but may be submitted earlier). Download and complete the appropriate form, then obtain approval signatures at both departmental and college levels. All proposals related to graduate education then go to the Graduate School.

Most academic requests submitted to the Graduate School are reviewed for approval by the [Graduate Council](#). Please be aware that such requests, especially course or program proposals, need to be submitted to the Graduate School at least two weeks prior to a [scheduled Graduate Council meeting](#) (See Table 1). This is because proposals must be reviewed by the Graduate Curriculum Committee prior to consideration by the Graduate Council.

Once the Graduate Council approves a proposal, it then goes to the [University Academic Affairs committee](#) for approval ([note scheduled meetings](#)), then to the University Executive Committee ([note scheduled meetings](#)), and then onto the University Senate agenda ([note scheduled meetings](#)). It is best to have course proposals to the senate level by October for a spring semester start or March for a fall semester start. Graduate Council does not meet during the summer. Department and college committee representatives serve as contacts for questions about status of proposals.

Table 1. Important dates* for graduate curriculum reviews and votes – Fall 2011

Proposal Deadline for Grad Council Consideration	Graduate Council Curriculum Committee Meets to form recommendations	Graduate Council meets, discusses and does voting	Academic Affairs meets and votes	Senate Exec meets and sets Senate consent agenda	Faculty Senate Meets and votes
				August 29	September 12
August 31	September 7	September 14	September 20	September 26	October 10
September 28	October 5	October 12	October 25	October 31	November 14
October 26	November 2	November 9	November 22	November 28	December 12
November 30	December 7	December 14			

*Does not include all meeting dates for Academic Affairs

Common mistakes on course proposals that result in an application being returned for revision, which delays approvals:

- ✎ Failure to provide all or adequate information requested on the form. A common error is to not include adequate information about the resources required, i.e. faculty time, lecture space, teaching lab space, Bb, library. Graduate courses are not cheap to manage, and this needs to be acknowledged and considered.
- ✎ Using “course change” when “new course” is appropriate. This is a common mistake when a department wishes to change a course from a 79x to a permanent course number. This is technically not a change since the 79x number stays on the books. See uniform course numbers in the catalog ([pp. 203-204](#)).
- ✎ Failure to attach a syllabus.
- ✎ The syllabus attached is not updated to match with the request form and/or not compliant with [Policy 331.1](#) and [Academic Affairs guidelines](#).
- ✎ The grading scale is not clear enough to let a student know what it takes to get a certain grade in the course. Expectations must be clear.
- ✎ A grading scale missing D and F grades. Many think a C is failing for graduate students. It is not failing (unless a program specific policy), but may put a student on academic warning. The exact grade of C, D or F would impact the GPA and the amount of work (and advising) the student will need to gain back good academic standing. See the catalog for NDSU grading ([p. 43](#)).
- ✎ The syllabi attached for 4xx/6xx courses do not clearly distinguish expectations for graduate students (6xx), which must explicitly exceed those for undergraduates (4xx). See dual-listed courses on page 201 of the [catalog](#).
- ✎ There are not enough milestone assessments/grades early enough in the course to let a student know if they should drop.
- ✎ The Bulletin description does not appear on the syllabus.
- ✎ Departmental and/or college-level signatures are missing on the original copy.
- ✎ Statements from other departments impacted by the request are not included.
- ✎ Proposals to cross list a course may not comply with [Academic Affairs policy](#).
- ✎ Contact hours are not consistent with policy (see Academic Credit, p. 23, [catalog](#) and <http://www.ndsu.edu/registrar/policies/credit/>). Online courses should indicate time commitment equivalencies to contact hours.

Common Misconceptions about Graduate Courses and Programs

Perceptions/assumptions about Graduate level courses and programs are often incorrect. For example, some think that *600-level courses* are *Masters level courses*; this is *not true*. A 600-level course is a graduate course that is taught in tandem with a 400 level course. [Doctoral students](#) may include 600 level courses in their programs, but are required to have at least 15 credits of didactic course work at the 700-level, whereas a [Masters](#) Degree program could conceivably consist entirely of 600-level courses per [Graduate School policy](#). Currently the Graduate School does not have criteria distinguishing a 600-level course from a 700-level course, beyond the fact that a 700-level course is not associated with a 400-level course. Another misconception is that online courses are considered differently than face to face courses. Delivery of a course is irrelevant and is not noted on a transcript. All graduate courses must meet quality expectations regardless of delivery mechanism.

Curricular Terminology

(see <http://www.ndus.edu/makers/procedures/sbhe/default.asp?PID=102&SID=5>)

Program = name for the major program of study for a discipline

Graduate Degree = the credential, i.e. M.S., M.A., Ph.D. The different types of graduate degrees including Plan A, Plan B and Plan C (professional) Masters degrees are described in the NDSU [Graduate Bulletin](#).

Subplans = a broad term used to define a prescribed grouping or menu of courses within a major program curriculum that is intended to provide students with a more specialized focus of study within the discipline. Subplans include options, tracks, emphases, cognates, specializations or concentration within academic plans of study. For more information, credit requirements for appearing on transcripts and approval processes see <http://www.ndsu.edu/facultysenate/acadaffairs/subplans/>.

The Graduate School considers approved subplans as those that are included in the application process, appear on the plan of study and may also be approved to appear on transcripts. Unofficial/unapproved subplans are for departmental tracking purposes only. Approved subplans that appear on transcripts also appear on disquisitions. Subplans do not appear on diplomas.

Graduate Certificate = a credentialed specialized course of study requiring at least 8 credit hours at the graduate level.

New Graduate Program Proposals

Assume it will take most of an academic year for a new program to move through the approval process.

Those with an interest in developing professional Masters degrees (Plan C) may find the Council of Graduate Schools helpful. The CGS provides information at <http://www.cgsnet.org/Default.aspx?tabid=120>

Stage I is described at <http://www.ndsu.edu/facultysenate/acadaffairs/procedures/>

Stage II Program Proposals are described at the same link as Stage I. Below is a proposal template based on that information:

I. The *Academic Affairs Request* [Cover Page](#) and [signature page](#)

II. A *one-page executive summary* which addresses the need for the program, program objectives, [cost and funding resources](#) for implementation and maintenance of program, accreditation information if applicable, relationship of the program internally and externally to the campus, articulation opportunities, and plans for assessment of the program.

III. An *in-depth review* of the areas covered in the executive summary

(A) **Need:**

- Student interest. Document the extent of interest on the part of present and potential students.
- Career Opportunities. Cite local, regional, and national career opportunities utilizing specific job market data or other career information if available.
- Special Interest. Document any special support for the program that has been expressed by local groups, state agencies, industry, research centers, and other educational institutions.
- Viability. Project the number of enrollments expected in the program and the number of graduates anticipated.

(B) **Program Objectives:** Describe the objectives of the proposed program including any Special strengths and/or unique features and relate them to the institutional mission, approved role and scope statement, and long-range academic plan as applicable.

(C) **Cost and Resources:** Estimate the cost of implementing and maintaining the program. Also, describe existing resources (equipment, facilities, personnel, library materials, etc.) that are available to support this program. Identify any

additional resources which will be required now or in the future. *For graduate programs include the form at <http://www.ndus.edu/uploads/resources/2697/academic-request-budget-worksheet-do.xls>*

(D) **Accreditation Requirements:** Respond to the following questions if applicable: Does the institution plan to seek the approval of a professional accreditation association? If yes, does the program meet the requirements of that association?

(E) **Relationship of the Program**

- To the institution. Describe the relationship of the proposed program to existing programs. If appropriate, describe inter-departmental, inter-college, or other Intrainstitutional relationships.
- To the System. Describe the relationship of the program to other System institutions. Is the program collaborative in design? Does the proposed program duplicate or augment others in the System?
- To the region. List programs elsewhere in the region which have a similar title or offer similar instruction and explain any major distinctions between the proposed program and the other programs. List the institutions, public or private, which offer them. (Note: Region is defined on the basis of the clientele to be served and the nature and scope of the program involved.)

(F) **Relationship to the Roundtable Recommendations** - <http://www.ndus.edu/information/>
(<http://www.ndus.edu/uploads/resources/2186/nd-university-system-21st-century.pdf>)

1. **Economic Development Connections:** *Direct connections and contributions of the University System to the economic growth and social vitality of North Dakota.* How does this program contribute to economic growth? How does this program meet the information, training, and technology development and transfer needs of businesses, industries, and communities? What are the career opportunities? Workforce need of employers and salary?
2. **Education Excellence:** *High quality education and skill development opportunities which prepare students to be personally and professionally successful, readily able to advance and change careers, be life-long learners, and knowledgeable contributing members of an increasing global, multicultural society.* How do the students, employers and professional organizations have input into the curriculum of this program? What “practice experience” in business and industry will this program provide?
3. **Flexible and Responsive System:** *A University System environment responsive to the prioritized needs of its clients and serves as a model of a flexible, empowering, competitive, entrepreneurial, and rewarding organization for a new economy in a rural state.* How has flexibility been expanded? How is this program being responsive to the business community?
4. **Accessible System:** *A University System which is proactively accessible to all area of ND and seeks students and customers from outside the state. It provides students, business, industry, communities, and citizens with access to educational programs, workforce training opportunities, and technology access and transfer – and does so with the same performance characteristics as described in the “Flexible and Responsive” cornerstone.* Who is being served by untraditional means? How is access being provided? What is the number of resident and non-resident, part-time and place-bound learners who will be able to take advantage of the increased access to education and training opportunities?
5. **Funding and Rewards:** *A system of funding, resource allocation, and rewards that assures quality and is linked to the expressed high priority needs and expectations of the University System – assures achievement of the expectation envisioned.* How does this program contribute to the economic development generation of the state, matching the expectations of the University System with the revenue generation capacity of the state and System? Does this program include interagency collaborative arrangements? Partnering arrangements with the private sector? Increased research investments beyond general fund sources?
6. **Sustaining the Vision:** *A structure and process which assures the University System for the 21st century, as described by these cornerstones, remains connected, understood, relevant, and accountable to the present and future research, education, and public service needs of the state and its citizens – sustaining the vision.* How does this program work toward the proposed vision?

(G) **Program Requirements:** List the program course requirements. Include in the lists of existing and new courses: course discipline/prefix, course number, course title, and the number of semester hours offered for the course.

(H) **Program Assessment/Evaluation:** Describe the plan for evaluating the success of the proposed program. Who will do the evaluation, what will be the basis of the evaluation, when will it occur, and how will the results be acted upon?

(I) **Program Delivery:** Describe the plan for delivering this program. Will the program delivery be traditional or distance education? If the program is to be offered through a distance education medium, is the request for IVN, Internet, or other methods? Approval to deliver a program off-campus does not guarantee times, dates, and receiving sites for any distance education medium; e.g. if IVN is the medium of choice, see attached IVN Approval Policy to select times, dates, and sites.